



Lake County Commissioners

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LAKE COUNTY

106 4th Avenue East

Polson, Montana 59860

F A X

TO: Senator Kelly Gebhardt, Chairman
Senate Natural Resources Committee
FROM: Paddy Trusler, Lake County Commissioner
DATE: April 6, 2009

MESSAGE: Testimony on HB 674 & HB 669



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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record my name is Paddy Trusler and I am Chairman of the Lake County Commissioners. Lake County supports HB 674 endorsing the Montana Legacy Project and the Montana Working Forests proposal. We also support the companion bill, HB 669.

In December 2008, Lake County received a draft fiscal impact analysis of the Montana Working Forest project on Lake County. This report was provided Lake County by Headwaters Economics of Bozeman. While it is understood that the fiscal impact is specific to Lake County, I am confident that the conclusion is germane to Missoula and Powell counties.

The fiscal impact analysis concluded two major points.

1. The Montana Working Forest Project provides substantial fiscal benefits when compared to residential development on Plum Creek Lands. Rising service costs combined with new revenues that will grow more slowly will lead to annual net deficits from new residential development. This is particularly true of homes that could be built on the Plum Creek lands that would result in annual deficits of more than \$45,000 to Lake County, and would generate new unfunded capital facilities needs of more than \$500,000 by 2025.
2. The Montana Working Forests Project does two important things for Lake County's fiscal health. First, it holds costs down by precluding residential development on lands remote from service and population centers that would be expensive to provide services to. Second, it maintains important opportunities for commercial and industrial activity. Working forests preserve the potential for timber and restoration activities. Access for recreation, hunting and fishing can support local businesses. Less obvious but equally important are amenity values associated with these lands that have become important drivers of economic activity in the west's changing economy.

I believe that acquisition of Plum Creek lands is good for the counties, good for the State, good for the schools and most importantly it is good for the public. I again urge support of House Bills 674 and 669 and thank each of you for your service.